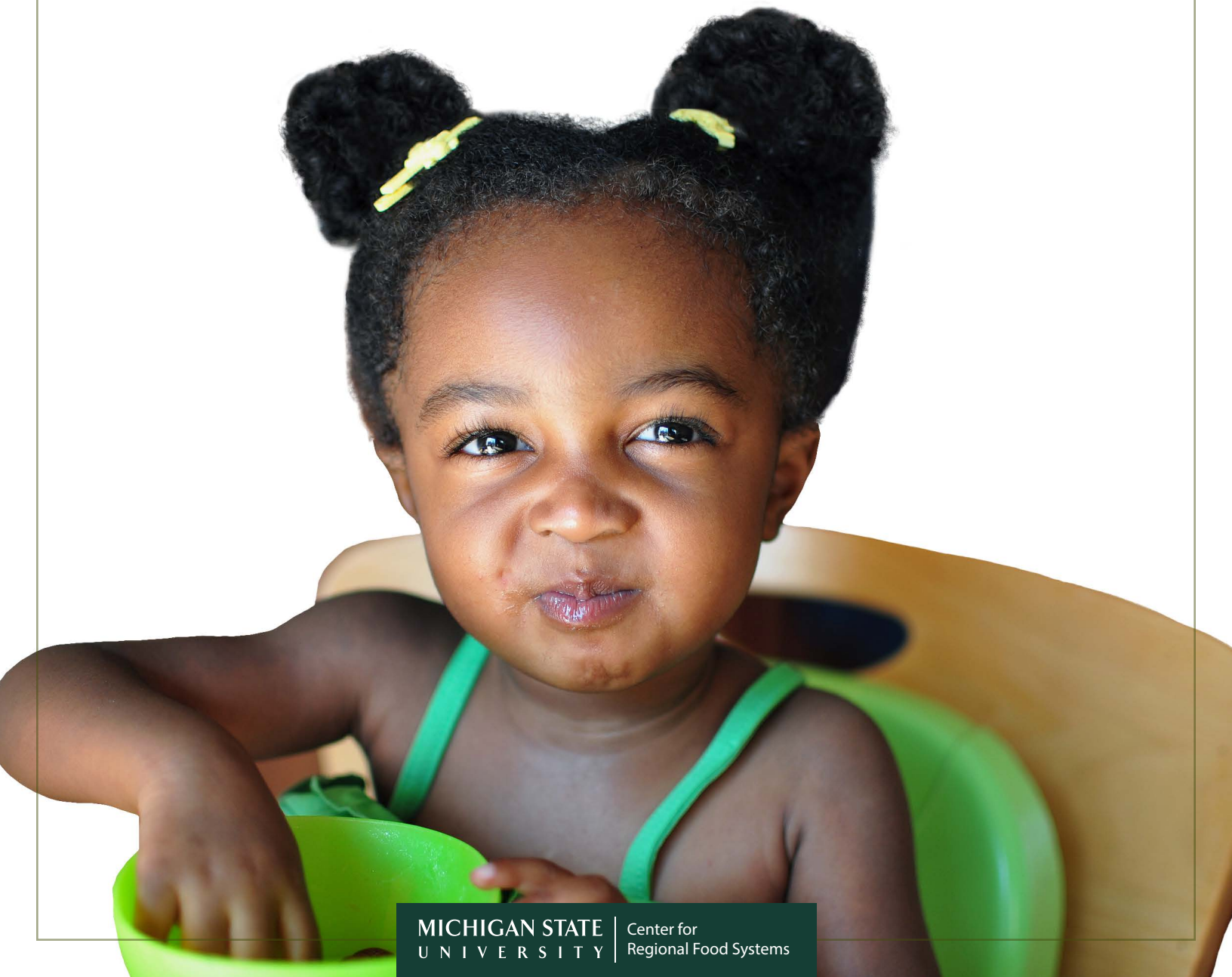


LOCAL FOOD FOR LITTLE EATERS

A Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Guide to Local Food Purchasing





Purpose of This Resource

This resource is intended for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) programs looking to increase the amount of local food they purchase and use in MSHS meal programs.

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This PDF is interactive!

You can check boxes and add text to answer questions. Look for links you can click to navigate this guide and visit resources!

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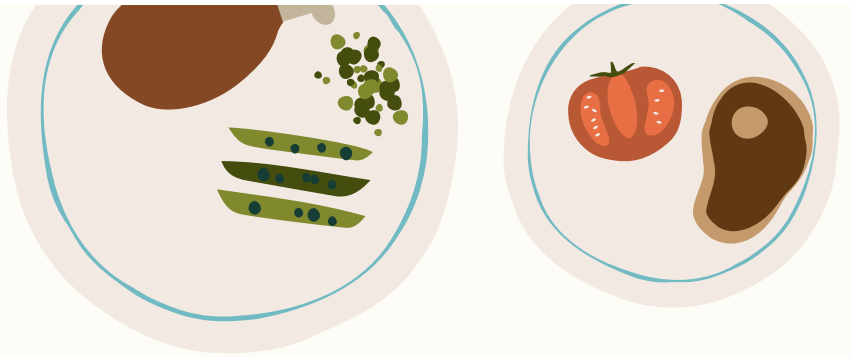
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Introduction



INTENDED AUDIENCE

This guide is intended to help MSHS programs increase the amount of local foods they purchase and use for early care and education (ECE) programs serving children of migrant and seasonal farmworkers. Program providers can follow the step-by-step instructions and utilize the tools, which build upon each other, to help MSHS programs purchase and use more local foods in their food programs.

Additionally, state migrant childcare programs typically funded by the federal government and the state in which the program is located may benefit from this guide. Offering similar services as MSHS programs but with different eligibility requirements, state programs are open for varying lengths of time during the year, based on the agricultural season. Family childcare homes serve children of mixed ages in a home setting, some of whom may be migrant workers during the agricultural seasons. These programs receive out-of-pocket payments for childcare services or state-funded daycare payments for low-income families.

RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR MSHS FOOD PROGRAMS

MSHS programs receive funding for their meals from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). CACFP provides federal reimbursements to ECE, adult care, and at-risk after-school programs.

Here are some important things to know about CACFP:

- **Meals and snacks served through CACFP must meet federal nutrition guidelines.** As MSHS is a division of Head Start, children participating in MSHS qualify for full reimbursement of CACFP meals. Information on CACFP meal patterns and menus can be found at http://fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/ProgramBasics/Meals/Mean_Patterns.htm.
- In order to purchase food with CACFP funds, **MSHS must follow federal competitive procurement procedures**, outlined on page 5. “Procurement” is the government term for purchasing or obtaining food.
- **Programs are not able to use “local” as a specification in procurement procedures**, as that is seen as restricting competition. However, programs can include specifications that tailor requests toward local food. For example, specifications can include product or vendor attributes such as freshness of food products, availability of specific product varieties, or the ability to host field trips.
- Migrant family childcare homes also utilize CACFP; however, **family childcare homes are exempt from the procurement practices outlined on page 5.**



TYPES OF PROCUREMENT

Formal Procurement¹

Formal procurement is mostly used for larger and/or multisite programs or for procuring from a broadline distributor. Formal procurement procedures require public requests for bids and apply to food purchases with a dollar value above the federal small purchase threshold of \$150,000. However, applicable state or local policies may indicate a lower small purchase threshold. In these cases, the more restrictive (lower dollar value) threshold must be used.

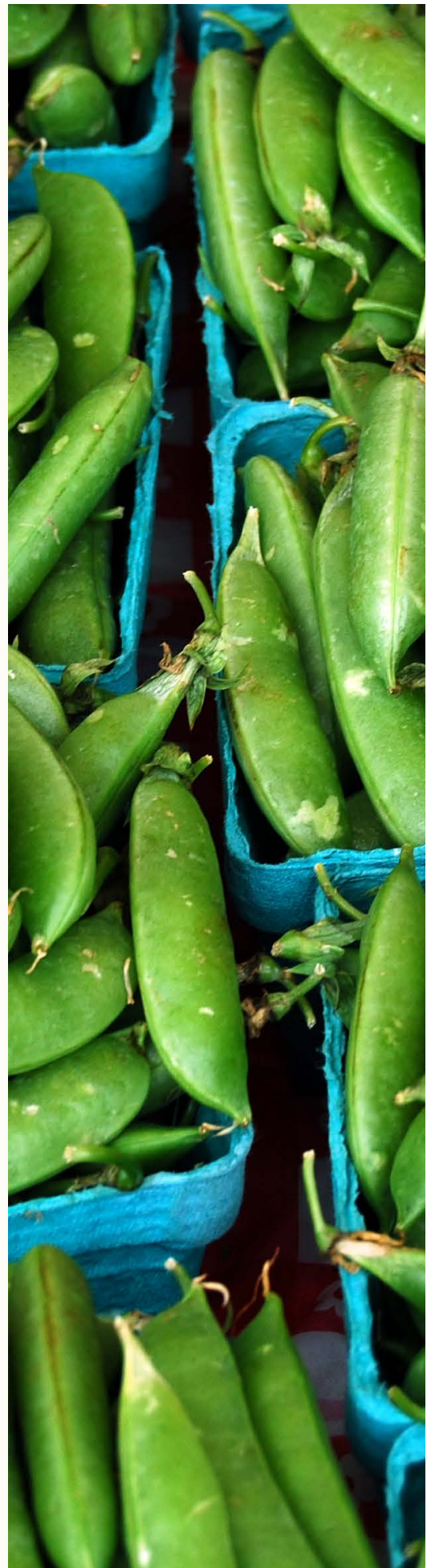
Informal Procurement

Informal procurement applies to food purchases with a dollar value below the federal small purchase threshold. State or local levels may vary and should be followed if they are more restrictive. Rather than making a public request for bids, however, programs can follow the informal purchasing procedure by documenting prices from a minimum of three vendors. Programs can choose to approach only local farmers or vendors for price comparisons and must carefully document all the procedures they follow.

Micro-purchasing

Micro-purchasing can be conducted for single transactions under \$3,500. Using this method can be as simple as finding a vendor, purchasing their products, and then documenting these purchases without providing competitive price quotes. Micro-purchasing makes it easy to take advantage of discounted or surplus products or to purchase foods for events that do not fall into a food purchasing plan. If multiple purchases from the same vendor are planned, price quotes from multiple vendors should be obtained, similar to the informal procurement method.

¹ USDA. (2015). Procuring local foods for child nutrition programs. Retrieved from http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/f2s/F2S_Procuring_Local_Foods_Child_Nutrition_Prog_Guide.pdf





The Farm to MSHS Road Map

Click on the
check box to
complete the step!



STEP 1: GET STARTED

- Determine interest** and ability to purchase and use local foods at your program.
 - **Tool:** Local Food Purchasing Assessment
- Decide which local foods you would like to buy** and use based on your region's seasonal availability.
 - **Tool:** Local Foods Worksheet
- Review your current meal planning practices.** Analyze your menu to quickly identify opportunities to add local foods.
 - **Tool:** Menu Analysis Worksheet

STEP 2: BUILD COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

- Network** with farmers, community organizations, other MSHS programs, centers or family daycare homes, schools, and institutions in your community to find resources and supporting partners in your work. Utilize program newsletters, meetings, program events, and websites to share your Farm to MSHS plan and your definition of local food (see below).
- Create a farm to MSHS program team** to support your program's efforts and help strengthen community connections.
 - **Tool:** Farm to MSHS Program Teams
- Define what "local" means to you.**
 - **Tool:** Develop Your Local Definition
- Choose which types of vendors** would be best from which to purchase local food for your program.
 - **Tool:** Vendor/Sourcing Options and Supports
- Link to local food through food distributors** you currently use. MSHS programs may use a full-service (broadline) distributor and/or specialty distributors to purchase much of their food, and local food can be a part of that. Ask questions to help select vendors who meet your specific needs.
 - How to Connect with Food Distributors
- Seek out local farmers** who may be willing to sell to you when local foods are available and in season. Purchasing directly from farmers can allow for smaller quantity seasonal purchasing opportunities and for relationships to develop and grow over time. Ask them about options for purchasing food for your program.
 - How to Connect with Farmers
 - Conducting a Site Visit

STEP 3: PREPARE TO PURCHASE LOCAL FOODS

- ❑ **Determine your criteria for selecting vendors of local foods.** Create a plan for evaluating price quotes and/or farmer/vendor proposals based on your criteria.
 - **Tool:** Sample Criteria for Selecting Vendors

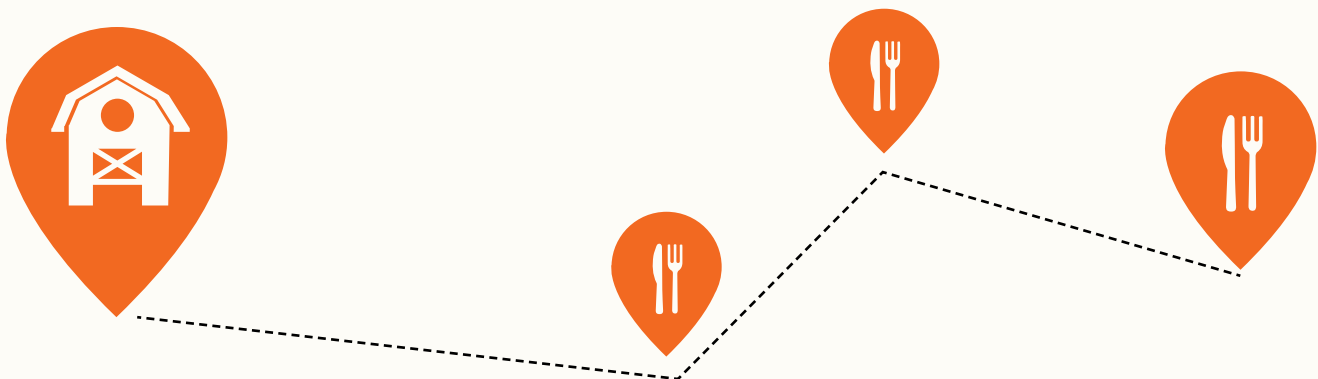
- ❑ **Prepare a cover letter** informing potential vendors of your interest in purchasing local foods for your program. Include notes about your reasons for purchasing local foods, information about your program, and any requirements for production and/or food safety practices.
 - **Tool:** Sample Letter to Potential Vendors

- ❑ **Prepare a vendor information questionnaire** to distribute to potential vendors and farmers. Information received from vendors will help identify how closely a farmer or vendor meets your selection criteria.
 - **Tool:** Sample Vendor Questionnaire

- ❑ **Prepare a product availability and pricing form** to distribute to potential vendors. Ask for information related to criteria that is important to the decision-making process. Having more flexibility increases the likelihood that a farmer or vendor will meet your needs.
 - **Tool:** Sample Product Availability and Pricing Form

- ❑ **Discuss timelines** with local farmers and vendors. Starting this conversation in winter or early spring, or even the year before, can help farmers plan their crops and plantings accordingly. Discuss pricing and payments so both parties know what to expect.

- ❑ **Spread the word!** Use community connections to reach out to potential vendors. Visit local farmers markets to talk with farmers about this opportunity. Post about efforts in your newsletter, on the program website, or social media. Remember to include contact information so farmers and vendors know how to get in touch to learn more.



STEP 4: CHOOSE FOOD PRODUCTS AND VENDORS

- Discuss food safety** with the farmers and/or vendors you have identified by visiting them and learning about food safety practices they have in place. You can also ask about how food is produced and handled after harvest.
 - **Tool:** Food Safety Options on the Farm
 - **Tool:** Information About Food Safety: Formal Audits and Assessments

- Choose one or more farmers and/or vendors** that best fit your local sourcing definition and purchasing needs. Based on information received from current and potential vendors, use your established criteria from Step 3 to evaluate your options. Follow up to let farmers and/or vendors know whether you have chosen to work with them.

- Connect with vendors** to discuss logistics, including packaging, labeling, ordering, delivery, and payment. Discuss other ways to engage farmers and food vendors, such as taking field trips and inviting the farmer or vendor to visit the program.

STEP 5: BEGIN PURCHASING LOCAL FOODS!

- Build in opportunities to try local foods.** Use taste tests and classroom conversations to encourage children to try the new foods.
 - **Tool:** Serving New Local Foods in MSHS Programs

- Local Foods and Meal Time

- Activities with Children

- Engage children in learning opportunities** related to where food comes from while increasing their intake of fresh, healthy, locally grown foods.
 - **Tool:** Resources for Local Food Education and Curricula
 - **Tool:** Resources for Food Safety in the Kitchen and Classroom

- Grow your program!** Once you get started, you can modify your menus to include more local options, engage parents/families in the program, and open up markets to families. There is no limit to how your program can grow!



Step 1 Get Started

LOCAL FOOD PURCHASING ASSESSMENT

Before you purchase local food, it is important to assess your current practices to understand how local food purchasing can be incorporated. This assessment will help you take stock of current practices and start to identify ways to incorporate local food.

1. Food Preparation and Volume

- a. How would you describe your food preparation?
- Scratch cooking
 - Heat-and-serve (mostly prepackaged and/or precooked)
 - Provided by a neighboring school/district or central kitchen
 - Off-site
 - Combination of _____ and _____
 - Other (specify): _____
- b. How many do you serve per day?
- Breakfasts: _____ Snacks: _____
- Lunches: _____ Dinners: _____
- Number of programs or feeding sites:

- Number of sites where cooking occurs:

- c. How many months is your program in operation?
- January
 - February
 - March
 - April
 - May
 - June
 - July
 - August
 - September
 - October
 - November
 - December

Are there local foods you would consider purchasing if you had enhanced storage or preparation capabilities? YES NO

2. Logistics: Ordering, Payment, and Delivery (note your responses on a separate piece of paper)

- a. What are your current purchasing procedures?
- b. Does your program purchase food in bulk? From which sources?
- c. Does your program have contracted food distributors? From which sources?
- d. To how many locations is food delivered?
- e. How many food deliveries are made per week per location? At what times?
- f. How do you prefer to place orders: by telephone, fax, text, email, or a combination of methods?
- g. Are there administrative restrictions on vendors from which you can purchase? Does your finance department allow for food purchases from smaller accounts?
- h. What are your payment procedures, and how often are payments made? How long will it take for vendors to receive your payment?

3. Purchasing Local Foods

a. There are many reasons to buy locally grown and locally produced foods. What are the advantages of offering local foods that make sense for your program? Check all that apply.

- Experiential learning opportunities
- Access to fresher foods
- Higher quality of food
- Lower cost of food
- Ability to purchase special varieties and types of food
- Greater ability to include culturally relevant foods
- Connecting children to their parents' profession
- Increasing children's exposure to a variety of fresh foods
- Promoting greater consumption of fruits and vegetables
- Knowing the products' source
- Supporting the local economy and local farms
- Building community partnerships
- Lower transportation costs
- Reduced use of pesticides, hormones, etc.
- Positive publicity for the food service program
- Opportunity for parent/family engagement
- Fulfilling child, parent/family, and/or teacher requests for local food
- Other (specify): _____

b. ECE programs take different approaches to including local foods in meal programs. Which approaches interest you? Check all that apply.

Sourcing:

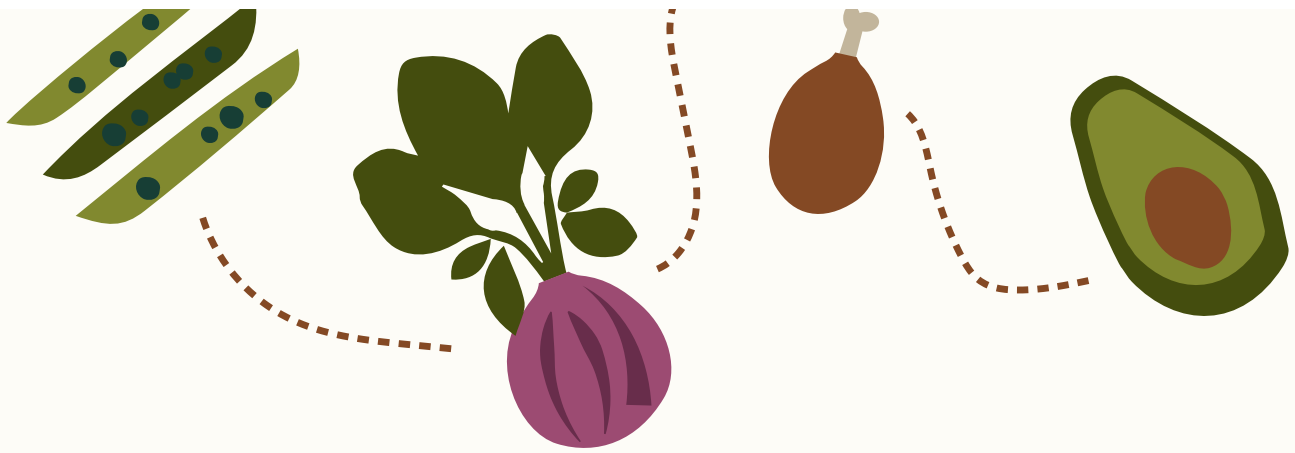
- Ask your current vendor(s) or food provider(s) to offer local food items
- Buy directly from the farmers who employ families from the program
- Buy directly from local farmers or farmers markets
- Receive donations from a local food bank
- Purchase bulk foods or seconds (cosmetically imperfect products)
- Purchase or receive direct donations from fairgrounds or produce auctions
- Grow your own food in an on-site garden

Frequency:

- Plan menus around seasonal availability of local products
- Buy and highlight one or two local products each month or season
- Serve local foods on a limited or pilot basis, such as at one site or on one day per week
- Substitute products on your menu with locally available foods or alternatives when available (make sure your food program director will allow changes and menu substitutions!)

Education:

- Conduct food tastings with children
- Highlight local food sources in marketing materials or posters
- Host farmer visits from local food vendors



LOCAL FOODS WORKSHEET

The following charts list foods that might be available locally, including fruits and vegetables, beans and legumes, meat, and dairy products. In each column, check off which products you currently purchase in which form(s). Then, mark which products are available locally to help you start to identify foods to substitute with local products. Many of the products included on this worksheet are culturally relevant to MSHS populations.

Think about what additional products may be available that are culturally appropriate, and include them in the “other” categories. Purchasing produce in season can result in fresher, tastier food and less waste. Find out what is available seasonally near you by connecting with the following resources:

- The state department of agriculture
- The county agricultural commissioner (if applicable)
- Local Cooperative Extension agents

Meat Products	Processed*	Unprocessed**	Available Locally
Beef			
Chicken			
Turkey			
Fish			
Lamb			
Pork			
Other Seafood			
Other:			

Dairy Products	Currently Purchase	Available Locally
Milk		
Cheese		
Eggs		
Yogurt		
Other:		

* Frozen, canned, etc.

** Fresh

Pulses	Dried	Canned	Available Locally
Adzuki beans			
Black beans			
Black-eyed peas			
Cranberry beans			
Cannellini/white kidney beans			
Chickpeas			
Dry peas			
Fava beans			
Great Northern beans			
Lentils			
Lima beans			
Navy beans			
Pinto beans			
Red kidney beans			
Small red beans			
Yellow-eyed beans/Peas			
Other:			

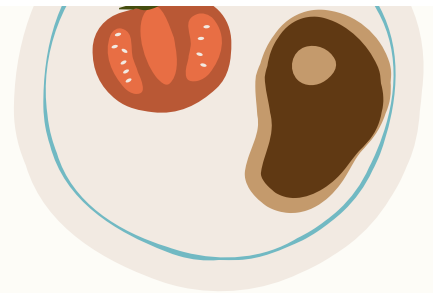
Fruits	Processed*	Unprocessed**	Available Locally
Apples			
Apricots			
Bananas			
Blackberries			
Blueberries			
Cantaloupe/ Muskmelon			
Cherries			
Cranberries			
Grapes			
Grapefruit			
Guava			
Honeydew melons			
Kiwi			
Nectarines			
Oranges			
Peaches			
Pears			
Plums			
Raspberries			
Rhubarb			
Strawberries			
Watermelon			
Other:			
Other:			

Herbs	Dried	Fresh	Purchase Locally
Basil			
Chives			
Cilantro			
Cumin			
Dill			
Epazote			
Mint			
Oregano			
Parsley			
Rosemary			
Sage			
Thyme			
Other:			
Other:			

* Frozen, canned, etc.
** Fresh

Vegetables	Processed*	Unprocessed**	Available Locally
Asparagus			
Avocados			
Beans, green			
Beets			
Broccoli			
Brussels sprouts			
Cabbage			
Cactus/Nopales			
Carrots			
Cauliflower			
Celery			
Chayote			
Corn			
Cucumbers			
Eggplant			
Greens (collards, kale, etc.)			
Jicama			
Lettuce			
Mushrooms			
Okra			
Onions			
Parsnips			
Peas			
Peppers, bell			
Potatoes			
Pumpkins			
Purslane			
Radishes			
Rutabaga			
Salad greens			
Spinach			
Squash, summer			
Squash, winter			
Sweet potatoes			
Tomatillos			
Tomatoes (cherry or grape)			
Tomatoes, slicing			
Turnips			
Other:			
Other:			

Other Products	Currently Purchase	Available Locally



MENU ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

This worksheet will help identify simple, sustainable places in your current menus to substitute or add local foods. Use these findings to jump-start your local food purchasing program. Use knowledge around local seasonal production to review current menus and include one or two products already in use that are available locally. Then, identify how frequently to purchase these products and in which quantities. This can help inform your conversations with local vendors. This worksheet can also be used to add more culturally relevant items to the menu to reflect the cultures of the children the program serves.

Product	Current Purchasing Method	Purchasing Frequency	Standards for Purchasing (product specifications)	Times Served per Week/Day
Example: Vegetables: Green Beans	Broadline distributor	Once every 2 weeks	4 lbs. fresh green beans	2 times/week in lunches
Proteins (meats, beans, nuts, other legumes)				
Dairy				
Vegetables				
Fruits				
Whole grains				



Step 2

Build Community Connections

FARM TO MSHS PROGRAM TEAMS

Community connections are an important reason to buy local foods. Building a farm to MSHS team can support local food purchasing and the use of foods in MSHS meal programs. Families are a particularly valuable resource that MSHS programs could engage in a farm to school team. Because they work in agriculture, they have a direct connection to local food.

Possible team members:

- Program cook
- MSHS grantee CACFP food program manager
- Educators/teachers and staff
- Program directors and administrators
- Parents, grandparents, or other family members of children in the program
- Farmers, farmers market managers, and/or vendors
- Volunteers and other community members
- Health promoters
- Local Cooperative Extension staff

Some programs may already have teams in place as part of their program structure. Many Head Start programs include team building as part of their work toward community collaboration, self-assessment, and cooperative learning. These teams often focus on program components such as health and nutrition, education, literacy, wellness, or parent/family involvement. Because these structures already exist, it may be helpful to add farm to MSHS to the team's activities or form a subcommittee.

Meetings in which farm to MSHS discussions could be added:

- Family/parent meetings
- Meetings for health services or with health promoters
- Team management meetings
- Staff meetings
- Community partner meetings



DEVELOP YOUR LOCAL DEFINITION

When it comes to local food, defining “local” is up to center staff. This process might include educators, families, community partners, and farmers to help create a definition that builds community awareness of local foods. The definition should support the mission, vision, and goals of the center and should also support other community goals, if possible. If the definition requires approval from a supervisor, director, or funder, include that person in the decision-making process. If the program receives foods from a local school or district, talk to the food service director about any definitions of “local” currently used and how the definition fits with the goals of the local food purchasing program.

A number of options are available to define “local,” including the following:

- In the same community as the center or program
- In the same county as the center or program
- Within a five-county area surrounding the center or program site/setting
- Within a 200-mile radius of the center or program site
- In the same state as the center or program
- In a multistate region surrounding the center or program site/setting

The broader the geographic definition of “local,” the more foods and sources may be accessible. The narrower the geographic definition, the greater the impact on the immediate community. Allow room for the definition to evolve, and consider using a tiered definition and/or prioritizing different geographic areas for different products. Once your definition is established, share it publicly and use it as a networking opportunity for building support.

VENDOR/SOURCING OPTIONS AND SUPPORT

Now that a definition of “local” has been established, consider which vendors to use to purchase local foods by learning more about them, their products, and their practices. Talk with sales representatives from your current vendors about local foods of interest. Larger programs may already source food from full-service (broadline) and/or specialty distributors that may offer local foods or could consider purchasing local foods directly from larger farmers. Smaller programs may have more flexibility in purchasing local foods and can buy direct from the local farmers market or grocery store.

Programs receiving federal CACFP funds can use what is known as geographic preference to establish their own definitions of “local” for purchasing minimally processed foods and give preference to quotes or proposals received for these local foods. Learn more by visiting the USDA website: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/geographic-preference>

Consider which options might work best, and communicate your program’s definition of “local” and your goals. Some questions to consider:

- Could families who work in agriculture connect program staff to farmers or farm managers?
- Are there local farmers and vendors who could provide food and also serve as field trip sites?
- Are there opportunities to collaborate with community partners, other programs/centers, or other nearby institutions to purchase local foods together?
- Is a school or program garden a viable food source for the food program?
- Is it possible to employ a staff member, either part-time or full-time, to operate an on-site garden to supply the food program?

Options for local food vendors:

- Broadline distributors
- Specialty distributors, such as distributors of produce, dairy, and bread
- Food hubs, which are organizations that aggregate and distribute local foods
- Farmers markets
- Groups of farmers, or cooperatives, who work together to supply products to customers
- Farmers, particularly the farms that children's families work on
- Farm stands
- Edible gardens at centers or community gardens

HOW TO CONNECT WITH FOOD DISTRIBUTORS

Many food distributors may already source food from local farms, farmer cooperatives, and food processors or vendors. Ask sales representatives questions about their purchasing and marketing practices for local food. Buying food from local sources helps food distributors take advantage of cost savings, seasonal availability, and product quality and freshness. Listed below are some ways a food distributor can help programs link to local food. These tips can apply to linking with local farms as well.

1. Ask the food distributor or food service provider representative(s) to be part of the farm to MSHS team.
2. Gather baseline information on available products and request local sourcing information from food distributor(s), using the Local Foods Worksheet to help you keep track. Ask what local foods they already carry and whether they can provide regular updates on local food availability. Food distributors that work directly with farmers will have the most up-to-date information about in-season products and when and how long they will be available.
3. Buying local foods through a distributor does not have to mean losing the connection to the farmer. Ask your sales representatives to share how the distributors are connected to their growers or provide grower profiles containing important information, such as farmer growing practices.
4. As much as possible, build flexibility into the menu. If farmers need to sell surplus products quickly, distributors may pass on the savings to you, if you can easily make substitutions.



HOW TO CONNECT WITH FARMERS

Purchasing directly from local farmers creates a connection with the person growing the food. Direct relationships allow for greater knowledge about production practices, access to the freshest products, and access to on-farm or in-classroom educational opportunities. Early care educators have shared that visiting farmers markets and talking with farmers about their products is one of the best ways to find products for their settings. Talking with other providers to learn where they are sourcing certain products can be helpful and can also create the opportunity to share delivery costs by coordinating ordering and delivery or pickup. The following national resources can help you locate farmers to approach for local food purchasing:

Local Harvest

Local Harvest provides lists of nearby farmers markets, family farms, community supported agriculture (CSA), and other sources of sustainably produced food. localharvest.org

Cooperative Extension

Cooperative Extension programs are associated with land-grant universities. They provide educational programs on a variety of topics, often including local agriculture and community development. To find a nearby local extension office, visit the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture's land-grant university website directory. <http://nifa.usda.gov/land-grant-colleges-and-universities-partner-website-directory?state=All&type=Extension>

Natural Resources Conservation Service

This site provides a listing of county and state service offices that could provide connections to local farmers. <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?agency=nrcs>

Gleaning Programs

Food banks, charity organizations, and food pantries often benefit from gleaned produce. Gleaned produce is harvested from fields where farming operations have decided not to harvest due to market factors or produce below standards, such as seconds or cosmetically imperfect produce. endhunger.org/regions/

Food Policy Councils

Local food policy councils are focused on supporting local food systems. They may be willing to support efforts to source local food. foodpolicynetworks.org/fpc-map/

USDA Food Hub Directory

This directory can help you find a nearby food hub. <http://www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/foodhubs>

Agricultural and Commodity Organizations

Many state commodity organizations can offer contacts to farmers who may be interested in selling to MSHS programs.

CONDUCTING A SITE VISIT

Farm visits are also an option to begin building a relationship with a farmer and learning more about his or her production and handling practices. Many farmers who operate smaller farms carry out safe and healthy farming practices but may not document them. In these cases, farmers can provide a food safety and sanitation plan and/or program staff can visit the farm and ask the farmer questions related to the following:

- Record keeping
- Worker hygiene
- Pesticide use
- Compost and manure use
- Post-harvest handling



Step 3
Prepare to
Purchase
Local Foods

SAMPLE CRITERIA FOR SELECTING VENDORS

Once you have identified a few potential vendors, use this worksheet to evaluate whether the vendors meet your criteria. Sample criteria are included here, but the list can be customized.

MSHS Program: _____

Vendor: _____ Date: _____

Criteria:

- Price
- Dependability
- Food quality
- Taste test results
- Delivery schedule
- Flexibility
- Availability for promotion/education programs
- Liability insurance requirement
- Food safety and sanitation standards
- Approved by finance department
- Payment method and schedule

Justification for award:

Signature of Program Representative

Date

Tool adapted from Farm to Early Childhood Programs: A Step-By-Step Guide

SAMPLE VENDOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email address: _____

Are you willing to deliver?

- Yes
- No

Will you deliver to more than one location?

- Yes
- No

Amount of product liability insurance coverage (provide copy of policy): _____

Current local customers and contact information:

Product payment terms and expectations: _____

List any inspections or certifications your facility receives and frequency. Attach copies of the most recent inspection or certification report(s).

Please describe your food safety and sanitation practices.

Please explain your credit/return policy for products of unacceptable quality.

Are you available to visit our program to talk with children about how your product is grown?

- Yes
- No

Is your farm available for field trips?

- Yes
- No

Vendor's Signature

Date

Tool adapted from Farm to Early Childhood Programs: A Step-By-Step Guide

SAMPLE LETTER TO POTENTIAL VENDORS

Dear Produce Vendor:

_____ is now accepting proposals for delivery of fruits and vegetables for its food program.

Your contact information was provided by _____ as a potential supplier.

If awarded, vendor(s) may be asked to host field trips and/or visit the program to offer hands-on educational presentations introducing local produce to children and staff members. All successful vendors will be asked to meet with the food service manager and/or director individually to review a vendor contract/agreement prior to delivering produce and/or giving school presentations. All contract arrangements regarding delivery schedules, ordering, payment, availability/pricing of produce, and other pertinent items will be made during that meeting.

_____ reserves the right to award contracts to multiple vendors and does not guarantee any specific ordering volumes.

To submit a proposal for consideration, complete and return the enclosed vendor questionnaire and product availability and pricing form. If there is a product not listed that you would like us to consider for our program, please add it to the product availability and pricing form. All proposals are to be delivered in a sealed envelope with Produce Service clearly printed on the outside of the envelope.

The proposals must be received by _____ and be addressed to the attention of _____.

Please direct further questions to _____, _____,
or call _____.

Title

Sincerely,

Name: _____

Title: _____

Email address: _____

Tool adapted from Farm to Early Childhood Programs: A Step-By-Step Guide

SAMPLE PRODUCT AVAILABILITY AND PRICING FORM

This form can be filled out with local food products the center is interested in serving. It can then be presented to potential farmers and/or vendors to complete and return. This helps document product availability and cost for record-keeping and selection purposes.

Vendor Name and Contact Information:

Vendor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please fill in the columns for projected availability and unit pricing for the listed products. If there are products not listed here that you would like to be considered for use in the food program, please add them to this form in the space provided below.

Product	Varieties Available	Projected Quantity	Months Available	Unit Price	Minimum Order

Tool adapted from Farm to Early Childhood Programs: A Step-By-Step Guide



Step 4 Choose Food Products and Vendors

STEP 4: CHOOSE FOOD PRODUCTS AND VENDORS

It is important to discuss food safety with the farmers and/or vendors you have identified. You can ask about how food is produced and handled after harvest and/or visit them to learn more about their food safety practices.

Food Safety Options on the Farm

With young children, food safety is essential. MSHS program directors, kitchen staff members, and teachers all seek to provide safe, wholesome food to children in their programs. Each state has different requirements for food safety assurances, so check with your department of agriculture or education for what is required in your state. Some states require farms to be Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) audited to sell to early care and education settings. Below are some formal and informal ways to find information about food safety production and handling practices from farmers and vendors.

Information About Food Safety: Formal Audits and Assessments

- GAP (Good Agriculture Practices) and GHP (Good Handling Practices) audits are on-farm audits administered by the USDA and focus on best practices to assure that foods are produced and handled in the safest way. These audits are voluntary, as requested by the farmer, and conducted on the farm during harvest. Farmers are charged a fee for the audit.
- Other third-party businesses offer comprehensive on-farm food safety audits that may be required by larger buyers such as full-service distributors and grocery store chains. These audits are offered by companies such as Primus Labs and the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) on a fee-for-service basis. Both of these private companies provide third-party verification of safe food production and practices related to farmworkers, storage, packaging, processing facilities, and other types of farming practices for farms and ranches.

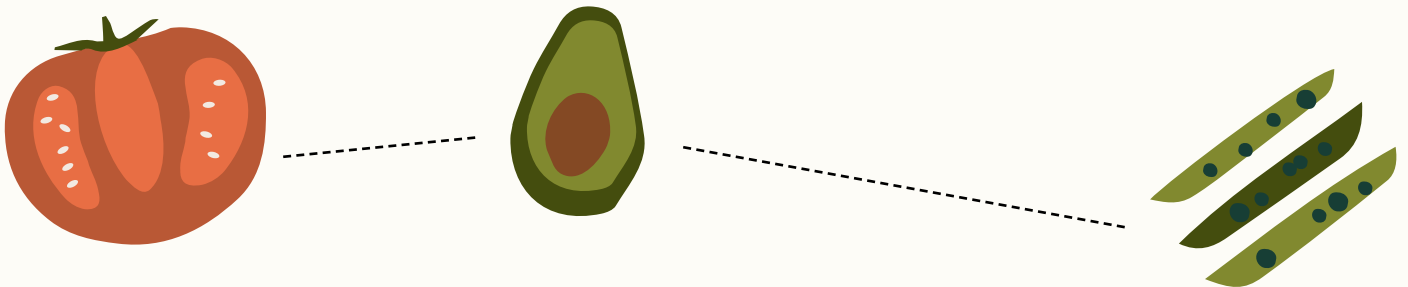
Pesticide safety is also an important issue in MSHS programs, as pesticide residues can pose serious health risks. Like purchased produce, donated produce should be properly washed before it is provided to children. The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP) has partnered with MSHS and other organizations to provide trainings on reducing risk of pesticide exposure.

The Limiting Exposure Around Families (LEAF)

curriculum seeks to mitigate and increase awareness of these take-home exposure risks to families: <http://afop.org/health-safety/pesticide-safety/take-home-exposures/>

José Aprende Sobre los Pesticidas

(José Learns About Pesticides) is a storytelling-based curriculum that teaches children how to protect themselves from pesticides, available in English and Spanish: <http://afop.org/health-safety/pesticide-safety/children-pesticides/>



A collage of several baskets filled with potatoes. The top and bottom sections show baskets of yellow potatoes, while the middle section shows baskets of red potatoes. The baskets are made of blue cardboard and are arranged in a grid-like pattern.

Step 5

Begin Purchasing Local Foods!

SERVING NEW LOCAL FOODS IN MSHS PROGRAMS

Serving new foods can be both rewarding and challenging. If children have not previously had opportunities to try new foods, they may need several opportunities before they like eating the new foods. Including activities and curriculum around local foods can help increase children's willingness to try new foods added to the meal program. MSHS programs have a high level of family engagement, which can support introducing new foods to children. Partner with families who harvest the food to introduce new produce to children and teach them about how the food grows.

LOCAL FOODS AND MEAL TIME

MSHS programs typically serve family-style meals. Serving local foods in this setting provides an opportunity to create conversations around food that can help children form good eating habits. Below are some ideas that can be used during mealtime to introduce new foods and create table talk.

- Talk to the children about where their food comes from, pointing out foods grown close to home, and talk about which foods are in season.
- Ask children what types of agricultural work their parents or other family members do and what types of vegetables and/or fruits they bring home, if any.
- Have conversations about foods that are culturally relevant to the children and how they see and eat these foods in their homes.
- Model good eating practices in front of the children and encourage staff to participate.
- Give the children small samples to taste, prepared in a variety of ways.
- Show the children raw examples of produce prepared and served in the meal.
- Ask the children about which foods their families grow at home.
- Feature a food of the week or month and serve it in different ways.

ACTIVITIES WITH CHILDREN

Classroom activities and structured learning times provide opportunities for children to learn about new, local foods. Learning times can be connected to the meals being served and enrich children's learning. Below are a few ways to incorporate local foods into learning.

- Have weekly taste tests of different foods, and ask children what they liked and why.
- Choose children's books or other reading materials about food, nutrition, and agriculture that support a healthy local food culture.
- Take field trips to local farms or farmers markets. Buy some local food products to take back to the classroom. Ask families to be a part of or lead the field trips to the farms they work on. (Note that this will require permission from the grower or foreman.)
- Teach seasonal activities related to planting, growing, and harvesting foods.
- Include farm to ECE activities and lesson plans, using one of the resources listed in Resources for Local Food Education and Curriculum or creating new lessons.
- Ask parents to visit and talk to the children about the farms where they work.
- Build local foods into other educational curricula.

RESOURCES FOR LOCAL FOOD EDUCATION AND CURRICULA

Trying new foods can be a creative, fun way to expand learning opportunities in the classroom. A number of resources are available that provide educational materials and ideas to teach about local foods and support healthy eating practices. Some are listed below. Check the website of the state agency that administers federal child nutrition programs for additional resources.

Preschoolers – Choose My Plate

This site offers resources to learn about healthy eating habits for young children and how to encourage healthy lifestyles.

choosemyplate.gov/health-and-nutrition-information

Farm to Childcare Curriculum Package

This toolkit provides a sample schedule and easy-to-incorporate lesson plans for a variety of fruits and vegetables.

<http://www.iatp.org/documents/farm-to-childcare-curriculum-package>

Farm to Preschool Lesson Plans

This collection of lesson plans includes a variety of activities and suggested resources to support local food education.

growing-minds.org/tag/preschool+lesson-plan/

Grow It, Try It, Like It!

Grow It, Try It, Like It! is a garden-themed nutrition education kit for childcare center staff that introduces children to fruits and vegetables.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it>

Farm to Early Care and Education

The National Farm to School Network's Farm to ECE website includes links to resources to support local food purchasing efforts, gardening, and food and agriculture education and curriculum.

farmtoschool.org/our-work/early-care-and-education

Harvest for Healthy Kids

Harvest for Healthy Kids provides free activity kits developed by teachers and childcare providers to inspire children with fresh, local food.

harvestforhealthykids.org

Our First Harvest/Nuestra Primera Cosecha

This resource is a bilingual garden-based early childhood curriculum that could complement local food purchasing practices.

cityblossoms.org/shop/?category=Publications

RESOURCES FOR FOOD SAFETY IN THE KITCHEN AND CLASSROOM

Serving fresh and local foods in MSHS food programs can raise a number of questions related to food safety and food handling. Below is a list of resources on safe food practices.

USDA Produce Safety Resources

This website offers a number of resources developed with the National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI). These resources are intended for child nutrition professionals, including information on handling fresh produce in the kitchen and classroom as well as product-specific information. Training materials, webinars, and information on school gardens are also available.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/food-safety/produce-safety-resources>

Best Practices for Handling Fresh Produce in Schools

This guide from the USDA and NFSMI gives advice on handling fresh produce and minimizing the risk of foodborne illness. It covers purchasing and receiving, washing and preparation, hand hygiene, serving foods, and proper storage of foods.

http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/foodsafety_bestpractices.pdf

The Food Allergy Book

This booklet from the NEA Health Information Network contains information for food service workers related to foods that trigger common food allergies in children. It details food allergies and intolerances as well as precautions that can be taken for children with allergies.

healthyfutures.nea.org/wpcproduct/food-allergy-book-what-school-employees-need-to-know-english/



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